

AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification by marked up replacement paragraph(s) as follows.

Please replace paragraph [33] on pages 10-11 with the following:

-- The result of the request may be a set of zero or more listings with information that is partially hidden, which in an exemplary embodiment, is the phone (i.e., directory) number. As more fully discussed below, partially hiding information allows the customer to determine which one of the listings the customer would like to view, and thereby, forces the customer to “select” the desired listing. The hidden information associated with the selected listing is subsequently made visible. This selection is tracked by the system 100. In particular, selecting a listing causes information about the listing to ~~being~~ be stored by the service provider for subsequent back-end processing, such as billing, reporting, and compensation to third party data providers. --

Please replace paragraph [39] on page 13 with the following:

-- System 100 provides secure access to the directory assistance databases 101 and associated applications. In particular, the system 100 supports authentication and authorization of the directory assistance capabilities; authorization is granular to the level of content within the databases 101 (i.e., varying levels of private data and public data). Commercial customers and third party developers are provided with ~~secured~~ secure access to the directory assistance data (basic and enhanced content). It is noted that any content that is specific to a customer is only accessible by that customer that owns that data. --

Please replace paragraph [62] on page 24 with the following:

-- Figures 5A-5C show the GUI screens relating to business/government directory listings, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. To query for a business or government listing, the ~~use~~ user may click on the Business/Government link 403 from the residential search screen 400. This link 403 accordingly directs the user to a business/government search screen 500, which possess similar navigational links as the residential search screen 400: a Residential search link 501, a Business/Government link 503, a Reverse Search link 503, a Feedback link 507, and a Help link 509. The business/government search screen 500 provides a similar entry format as that of residential search screen 400, and includes the following fields: a Business Name field 511, a Street Name field 513, a City field 515, a State field 517, and an Area Code field 519. The properties of these fields 511, 513, 515, 517, and 519 are enumerated in Table 3, below: --

Please replace paragraph [65] on page 25 with the following:

-- Further, screen 531 provides links that are similar to that of the search result screens 431 and ~~431~~ 461: a ~~residential search~~ Residential Search link 545, a Business/Government Search link 547, a Reverse Search link 549, a Feedback link ~~549~~ 551, and a Help link 553. --

Please replace paragraph [71] on page 27 with the following:

-- Figure 6B shows the reverse search result screen 631, which includes the links that are common to, for example, result screens 431 and 531: a Modify Search link 633, a New Search link 635, a ~~residential search~~ Residential Search link 637, a Business/Government Search link 639, a Reverse Search link 641, a Feedback link 643, and a Help link 645. In an exemplary embodiment, the results, listings 647 and 649, are sorted in an ascending manner by field values

in the following hierarchy: Last Name, First Name, State, City, and Directory number (Area code + telephone number). These fields are described below in Table 4. --

Please replace paragraph [77] on page 30 with the following:

-- Figure 9 shows a flow chart of a billing process associated with charging for directory services in the systems of Figures IA and LB. in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Instep 901, the billing server 106 (Figure IA) tracks the number of successful listing listings for the customer; that is, only the listings that are accessed and viewed for each search are considered for billing purposes. The billing server 106, per step 903, then computes the invoice amount for the customer depending on the billing options, which include transactions based fee, per seat, flat rate fee, volume based fee, or any combination of these options. Instep 905 the computed invoice amount is stored with other billing data (e.g., account information) in the billing server 106. Alternatively, the invoice amount may be computed by an external billing system (not shown) and downloaded onto the billing server 106 upon request of such information from the customer. After the invoice amount is available (i.e., computed), a user who is on-line via an access device may request to view the billing data from the billing server 106 (step 907). The access device then retrieves, as in step 909, the requested information from the billing server 106 using any delivery mechanism that the customer specifies (step 911). The delivery mechanisms include e-mail, fax, URL, pager, etc. and may be pre-defined. Additionally, the request may be pre-scheduled such that the customer is automatically sent the billing data with an explicit request. The above billing process may differ slightly depending on the billing arrangement. --

Please replace paragraph [78] on pages 30-31 with the following:

-- Figure 10 shows a flow chart of transaction-based billing process, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. As previously discussed, in the transaction based fee arrangement, the customer is charged a certain amount for each online directory assistance lookup that is successfully performed. It is noted that the service provider may elect to charge based on the total number of queries, irrespective of the number of successful listings; this is because each query consumes system resources of the WBDS 102 and if the customer continually utilize utilizes these resources excessively then the service provider is given a recourse to recoup some costs. In step 1001, the user transmits a query to WBDS 102 via an access device for directory information. If the listing is successful (step 1003), then the listing is tracked and designated as chargeable (step 1005). Next, if there are further queries from the user (as determined in step 1007), steps 1001-1005 are repeated as appropriate. However, if no more queries are performed, then the WBDS 102 totals the queries for the billing period and checks whether the total queries exceed a pre-determined threshold (step 1009). Accordingly, an additional overage fee is applied against the customer's account, per step 1011, in the event that the number of queries exceeds the threshold, which may be negotiated in advance. If the number of queries does not exceed the threshold, then the invoice amount can be computed (per step 1013). After computation of the invoice amount, the invoice amount may be stored in the billing server 106; alternatively, this invoice amount may be stored in a separate database for later retrieval by the billing server 106. The above billing arrangement advantageously enables the service provider to supply a directory assistance service with an effective billing mechanism, thereby creating a lucrative revenue stream for the service provider while reducing the cost of directory services to the customers. --